

Court of Common Council



CITY OF HARTFORD

550 MAIN STREET
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06103

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March 18, 2013

Planning and Development Committee
Room 2100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, and members of the Committee,

My name is Shawn Wooden, and I am the Council President for the City of Hartford. I am here to speak in favor of Raised Bill 1051, An Act Establishing Alternative Prequalification Requirements for Emerging Subcontractors. This piece of legislation is a positive step toward enabling local and small contractors to find work and to create jobs in Connecticut communities that desperately need employment.

The current requirements for prequalification present an enormous obstacle for many small businesses that do not have the resources to apply, but could effectively serve as subcontractors on a wide variety of projects. The existing requirements of a bonding letter and a financial review, in particular, significantly narrow the field of potential subcontractors and pose a particular challenge to small businesses, many of which are minority business enterprises (MBEs).

Just as a large out-of-state contractor is likely to bring with it out-of-state workers, the small contractors from right in our backyards will create job opportunities for those that we have been elected to serve - Connecticut residents. This is particularly important for our urban centers in the state. New Haven and Bridgeport have unemployment rates above 11%. And, my city of Hartford has a staggering unemployment rate of around 15%.

Among those unemployed are capable Connecticut residents who would be eager go to work each day - many who have come through one construction training program after another only to find no job at the end of the training.

How do I know this? Because I see them at public hearings in City Hall begging for work. I see them when they graduate from their training programs with OSHA certifications and the like. I see them

protesting quasi-governmental authorities spending millions on construction projects with little local or minority participation, only to be told that they could get contracts if they could be prequalified by the state. So, as long as we maintain unnecessary and redundant barriers to entry for local and minority subcontractors, opportunities to move the needle on high employment in our cities will remain rare.

And, to be clear, this bill would remove requirements that serve no legitimate state interests. There is no risk to the state for eliminating the requirement that subcontractors obtain bonding in order to be prequalified – general contractors are already required to secure bonding guaranteeing the completion of the entire project. And, why should the state be in the business of restricting a general contractor from hiring a subcontractor that doesn't meet a state created financial review? My understanding is that nearly all of the major general contractors perform their own independent financial review of subcontractors before hiring them.

So, such state-imposed requirements for subcontractors are not in the state's interest. In fact, these requirements are at the expense of the state's interest in increasing opportunities for all businesses and increasing employment for Connecticut residents. The raised bill simply removes costly and burdensome steps, and expands the pool of potential subcontractors. Easing the barriers to prequalification for subcontractors will also make it easier for general contractors to meet existing Minority Business Enterprise participation goals.

Each year, we invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our state's infrastructure, educational institutions, and public buildings. If we have the chance to take painless steps to ensure that more of that work can be done by contractors and workers from our neighborhoods, we should seize that opportunity.

Thank you for your time and attention. I urge each of you to support this important piece of legislation.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn T. Wooden", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Shawn T. Wooden
Council President